

Message Text

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63

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2473

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD BY POUCH

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SOCI, UR, US

SUBJECT: MOSCOW'S JEWS CELEBRATE NEW YEAR

USIA FOR IEE

GENEVA FOR USDEL CSCE

SUMMARY. MOSCOW'S JEWS CELEBRATED EVE OF JEWISH
NEW YEAR SEPTEMBER 26 IN RELATIVELY RELAXED ATMOSPHERE
WHICH WAS, HOWEVER, MARRED BY THE USUAL HARASSING TAC-
TICS OF THE MILITIA. END SUMMARY.

1. JEWISH WORSHIPPERS, INCLUDING NUMEROUS YOUNG
PEOPLE, OVERFLOWED MOSCOW'S CENTRAL SYNAGOGUE AND
WERE FORCED TO CONGREGATE ON SURROUNDING SIDEWALKS.
CITY'S SECOND, SMALLER SYNAGOGUE WAS FILLED WITH
MOSTLY OLDER JEWS, AND MILITIA WERE NOT PRESENT IN
FORCE.

2. THE NUMBER OF MILITIAMEN, NON-UNIFORMED "VOLUNTEERS,"
AND PLAINCLOTHESMEN ON DUTY NEAR CENTRAL SYNAGOGUE
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SEEMED SOMEWHAT SMALER THAN ON PREVIOUS JEWISH

HOLIDAYS. BULLHORNS WERE EMPLOYED ONCE AGAIN, BUT NOT AS CRUELY OR AS PERVASIVELY AS IN THE PAST. AUTHORITIES AGAIN BLOCKED OFF MAIN STREET NEAR THE SYNAGOGUE SO THAT TRAFFIC WOULD BE HEAVY. THIS GAVE THEM AN EXCUSE TO KEEP PEOPLE FROM CONGREGATING EN MASSE ON THE STREET IN FRONT. THEY PURPOSELY ADDED TO THE TRAFFIC PROBLEM BY EMPLOYING SEVERAL VEHICLES (PROBABLY UNMARKED POLICE CARS) TO MAKE REPEATED TRIPS PAST THE SYNAGOGUE. EMBOFF WAS ALSO TOLD THAT SYNAGOGUE LEADERS HAD "COOPERATED" WITH POLICE BY SHORTENING THE SERVICE, AND BY TURNING OFF LIGHTS IN THE BUILDING AND LOCKING ITS DOORS AS SOON AS SERVICE WAS COMPLETED.

3. BEHAVIOR OF THE MILITIA WAS, HOWEVER, GENERALLY BETTER THAN IT HAS BEEN IN RECENT YEARS. WITH SOME EXCEPTIONS, MILITIAMEN ACTED POLITELY IN CONTROLLING THE CROWD, AND ALTHOUGH THEY TRIED SEVERAL TIMES AFTER THE SERVICE TO MOVE PEOPLE ALONG, THEY DID OT USE FORCE. SEVERAL GROUPS OF YOUNG PEOPLE GATHERED AFTER THE SERVICE TO DANCE AND SING TRADITIONAL HEBREW SONGS. THEY WERE CONFINED TO FRONT STEPS OF BUILDING AND TO SURROUNDING SIDEWALKS BY MILITIA, BUT WERE NOT FORCED TO LEAVE. THERE WAS EVEN A BIT OF GOOD-NATURED BANTER BETWEEN MILITIAMEN AND SOME OF THE CROWD REGARDVKG SECURITY MEASURES EMPLOYED. WHILE THERE WERE A FEW MINOR SCUFFLES, IT SEEMED CLEAR THAT MILITIA HAD INSTRUCTIONS NOT TO PROVOKE INCIDENTS OR TO BE PROVOKED THEMSELVES.

4. FOUR EMBOFFS ATTENDED SERVICE AND WERE EAGERLY SOUGHT OUT BY WORSHIPPERS. MANY JEWS NOTED THE MORE RELAXED ATTITUDE OF THE MILITIA AND SEVERAL THANKED THE EMBOFFS FOR THEIR PRESENCE, SAYING "IT'S BECAUSE OF YOU." IN THIS CONNECTION "GENEVA," SENATOR JACKSON, "YOUR RADIO BROADCASTS," WERE MENTIONED. THEY EXPRESSED PLEASURE AT THE FACT THAT THEY COULD LISTEN TO VOA IN RUSSIAN AND INDICATED THAT MUCH OF THEIR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT U.S. AND WORLD EVENT CAME FROM VOA BROADCASTS. MANY WERE INTERESTED

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IN THE SECRETARY'S GERMAN JEWISH BACKGROUND AND WERE SURPRISED AND PLEASED THAT THERE WERE JEWISH AND EVEN YIDDISH-SPEAKING OFFICERS AT THE EMBASSY.
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